



23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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Resources and Development Committee receives report from Eastern Navajo Land Board

TSE'II'AH, N.M. – On Wednesday, the Resources and Development Committee received a report from the Eastern Navajo Land Board, regarding the board's current initiatives, concerns, and goals. In addition, Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture executive director Leo Watchman, provided information on the board's budget and the BIA's projects related to grazing permits.

Pursuant to Title 3 of the Navajo Nation Code, the Eastern Navajo Land Board consists of 20 land board members from various districts and communities in the Eastern Navajo Agency. The board's purpose is to preserve and improve the land, water, forest, forage, wildlife, and recreational resources in Eastern Navajo Agency through efficient grazing management.

"The Eastern Navajo Land Board is the same comparison to grazing officials within big Navajo. The board deals with unique challenges, because of land statuses. Receiving a report from the board is important to the committee members, because we need to hear their concerns and address how we can assist with their unique situations," stated RDC member Council Delegate Walter Phelps (Cameron, Coalmine Canyon, Leupp, Tolani Lake, Tsidi To ii).

Eastern Navajo Land Board president Paul Houston, said the board's fiscal year 2018 budget allocation is inadequate in regards to stipends, travel, and funding to complete ongoing initiatives. He also noted that board members do not have office facilities to help fulfill their duties and responsibilities.

During last week's budget session, the Council approved several reallocations of funding to address the unmet needs, which included over \$1.2 million for stipends for grazing officials, land board members, and farm board members. The Nation's comprehensive budget was approved by the Council last Thursday, and will soon be considered by President Russell Begaye.

RDC member Council Delegate Davis Filfred (Mexican Water, Aneth, Teecnospos, Tólikan, Red Mesa) asked how the board is addressing burials and feral horses in Eastern Navajo Agency.

"I clearly understand the frustrations of the board, but I am willing to provide assistance because burial areas and feral horses are Nation wide issues. I understand that there are 12 different land statuses in eastern Navajo, which must make it difficult to address community cemeteries and

private family burial plots. The same with the feral horses, we need to address it even when it is culturally sensitive to the people,” stated Delegate Filfred.

According to Watchman, feral horse collection efforts are a continuous effort, but only one chapter has submitted a supportive chapter resolution for the effort. He added that the majority of Eastern Navajo Agency chapters have to support the initiative to take effect.

RDC chair Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Lichíí, Steamboat) recommended holding a work session regarding policy changes that need to be addressed.

The Resources and Development Committee approved the report with a 5-0 vote along with a work session, which will be held when the Navajo Nation Department of Agriculture and the Eastern Navajo Land Board recommends internal policy amendments.

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